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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted at Broward Community College (BCC) to compare the performance on the College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST) of examinees with college preparatory experience to that of examinees without this experience. Data were drawn from CLAST tapes for the 1988-89 academic year and from BCC's admissions file. Passing rates for each CLAST subtest were calculated for examinees who had successfully completed any college preparatory course and for those who had not. In 1989, the passing rate for both groups combined was 78.7%. However, 87% of the examinees who did not have college preparatory experience passed all four subtests of the CLAST, while only 68% of those who had taken preparatory coursework succeeded in passing all subtests. In order to assess the effects of proposed increases in passing standards, the June 1989 CLAST results were recalculated. The results showed that the more moderate proposed increase would allow only about one-half of all examinees to pass the CLAST. Nearly two-thirds of those examinees who had no college preparatory experience would still pass, in sharp contrast to the 40% passing rate for college preparatory students. If the more stringent set of standards were used, the passing rate would drop to 20% for those with college preparatory experience and to 40% for those without. Graphs showing passing rates by subtest for each set of standards are included. (JMC)

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CLAST RESULTS BY COLLEGE PREPARATORY EXPERIENCE: PASSING RATES UNDER CURRENT AND INCREASED STANDARDS

INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH REPORT ABSTRACT RR89-23

LiAnne C. Gabe

August 30, 1989

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INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH
Report Abstract

CLAST Results by College Preparatory Experience:
Passing Rates Under Current and Increased Standards

RR89-23 **August 30, 1989**

Among the items required for this year's Report of Progress toward Excellence were several questions which concerned the relative performance on CLAST of examinees with college preparatory experience versus those without preparatory experience. Institutional Research examined the past year's CLAST data in order to respond to these questions, and additionally considered the effect of increased standards (see RR89-15 and RR89-20) on both groups of students.

In order to perform the analysis, the CLAST tapes provided by the state of Florida for the academic year 1988-1989 were used together with information from the college's admissions file. The passing rates for each subtest were calculated for examinees who had successfully completed any college preparatory course, and for those examinees who had not. It should be noted that the group without college preparatory experience consisted of only those examinees who had not earned any credits for college preparatory course work. There may be, within this group, a small number who required preparatory instruction based on entry-level test scores, but did not complete any. If this should be the case, it would indicate that the differences between the two groups are even greater than the present results indicate.

The overall passing rate for 1988-1989 was 78.7% when both groups were combined. However, 87% of the examinees who did not have college preparatory experience passed all four subtests of the CLAST, while only 68% of those who had taken preparatory coursework succeeded in passing all four subtests. This difference of nearly twenty percentage points in passing rates for the two groups, raised questions as to the effect of increased standards when the college preparatory experience is taken into account. In order to project the passing rates for both groups, the June 1989 CLAST results were recalculated twice: once as if the interim standards were in effect, and then as if the 1989 standards were in effect. The results are shown in Table 1.

As can be readily seen, the increase to interim standards will allow only about half of all examinees to pass the CLAST. However, nearly two-thirds of those examinees who had no college preparatory experience would still pass, in sharp contrast to the 40% passing rate for college preparatory students. When the 1989 standards are used, the effect is even more dramatic. Approximately one in five of those examinees who had preparatory experience would have succeeded in passing all four subtests of the CLAST. For those without preparatory experience, the outlook is brighter, but still grim, with roughly two in five passing all four subtests (see Figure 1).

When the individual subtest passing rates are examined, an interesting pattern emerges. Under the full 1989 standards, computation would be the most difficult subtest for

those who had preparatory instruction, with only 44% passing (see Figure 2). The reading and writing subtests would be those most frequently passed for both groups (Figure 3 and Figure 4). For those with no preparatory history, the essay would become the most problematic subtest, with less than two-thirds passing (see Figure 5).

When one considers only the non-preparatory students' passing rates for June 1989, they are much closer to those of the state university students, than the overall passing rate for BCC would indicate. Although university eligibility includes requirements other than entry-level scores, BCC passing rates for non-preparatory examinees exceeded those of native university examinees at four of the nine state institutions. These data support the conclusion drawn in a recent report issued by the Postsecondary Education Planning Commission (PEPC) on Florida's general education curriculum, where it was reported that community college examinees had higher passing rates on the computation portion of CLAST than did university natives, and similar overall passing rates, when entry-level test scores were controlled.

The percentage passing three subtests, combined with the pass four rate has been used in previous reports issued by this office to calculate the "potential passing rate." The rationale for using this measure is that students who fail only one subtest generally retake that subtest, and have a good chance of passing it on their second attempt. Conversely, those who fail two or more subtests are much less likely to retake the CLAST, and when they do so, are less likely to succeed. The failure to pass all four subtests under the 1989 standards will pose greater difficulties for the examinees who have preparatory experience than to those who do not need preparatory instruction. This can be seen in Table 1, where the potential passing rate for non-preparatory examinees is 72.6%, under 1989 standards. For those with preparatory experience, however, the potential passing rate is roughly 44%. This indicates that over half of this group would fail two or more subtests, thus reducing their chances for successful retakes.

The implications from these data are several. It is perhaps not surprising to find that those examinees who require remediation pass the CLAST less often than do those without the need for preparatory instruction. However, if more than a handful of such examinees are expected to pass under the 1989 standards, computation skills, particularly, must be improved. On the other hand, for those examinees who do not require preparatory courses, a refining of the skills required for the essay subtest is needed. Indeed, more attention to all skill areas will be required, especially for the examinees with prior preparatory instruction. If such improvement in the skills tested by CLAST do not occur, more than two thirds of BCC's future examinees are likely to fail at least one portion of the CLAST.

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Table 1

JUNE 1989 CLAST RESULTS BY PREPARATORY EXPERIENCE
UNDER CURRENT AND INCREASED STANDARDS

Under 1986 Standards

	No Prep	%	Prep	%	All	%
Passed Math	326	91.8%	254	82.2%	580	87.3%
Passed Reading	349	98.3%	286	92.6%	635	95.6%
Passed Writing	351	98.9%	287	92.9%	638	96.1%
Passed Essay	340	95.8%	271	87.7%	611	92.0%
Passed None	0	0.0%	1	0.3%	1	0.2%
Passed One	1	0.3%	10	3.2%	11	1.7%
Passed Two	7	2.0%	24	7.8%	31	4.7%
Passed Three	37	10.4%	56	18.1%	93	14.0%
Passed Four	310	87.3%	218	70.6%	528	79.5%
Total Examinees	355	53.5%	309	46.5%	664	100.0%

Under Interim Standards

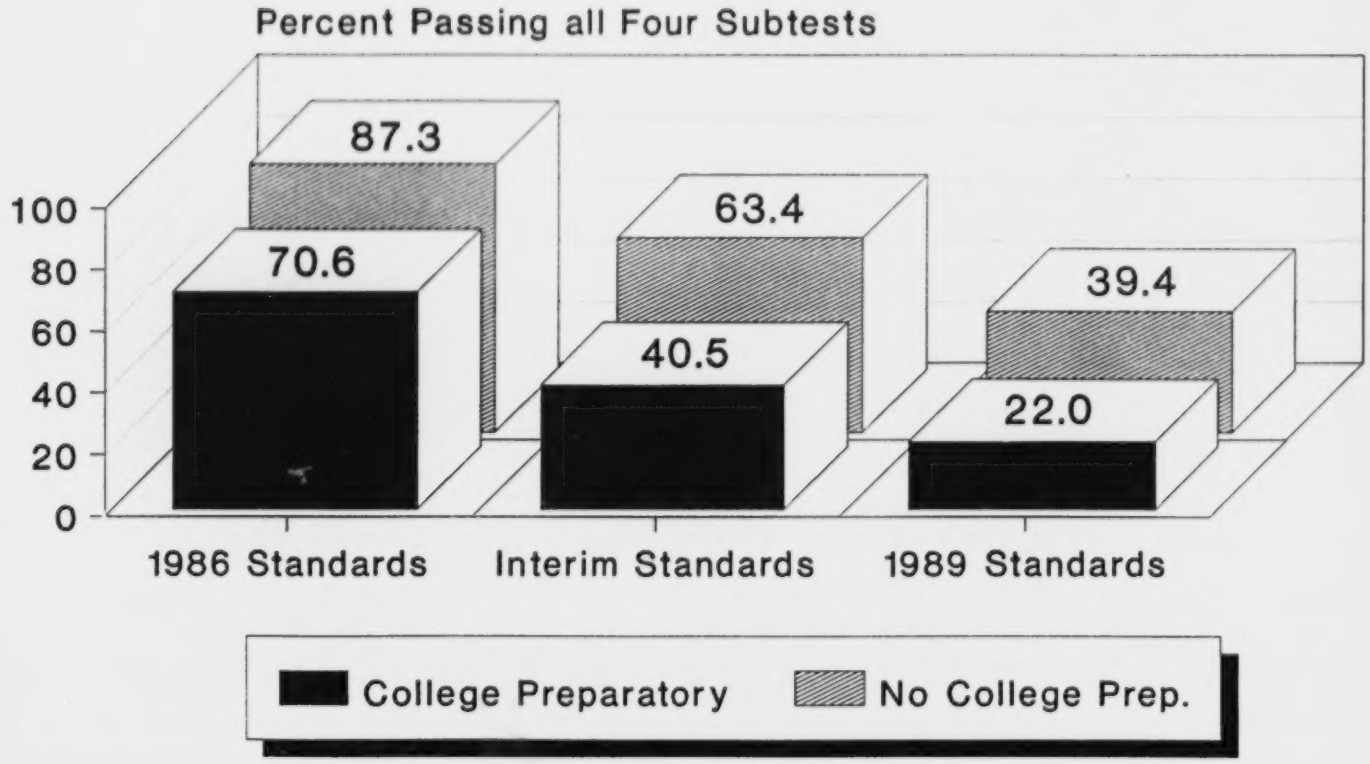
	No Prep	%	Prep	%	All	%
Passed Math	310	87.3%	221	71.5%	531	80.0%
Passed Reading	287	80.8%	191	61.8%	478	72.0%
Passed Writing	288	81.1%	204	66.0%	492	74.1%
Passed Essay	340	95.8%	271	87.7%	611	92.0%
Passed None	2	0.6%	10	3.2%	12	1.8%
Passed One	12	3.4%	40	12.9%	52	7.8%
Passed Two	35	9.9%	55	17.8%	90	13.6%
Passed Three	81	22.8%	79	25.6%	160	24.1%
Passed Four	225	63.4%	125	40.5%	350	52.7%
Total Examinees	355	53.5%	309	46.5%	664	100.0%

Under 1989 Standards

	No Prep	%	Prep	%	All	%
Passed Math	257	72.4%	136	44.0%	393	59.2%
Passed Reading	287	80.8%	191	61.8%	478	72.0%
Passed Writing	288	81.1%	204	66.0%	492	74.1%
Passed Essay	230	64.8%	166	53.7%	396	59.6%
Passed None	9	2.5%	34	11.0%	43	6.5%
Passed One	28	7.9%	58	18.8%	86	13.0%
Passed Two	60	16.9%	80	25.9%	140	21.1%
Passed Three	118	33.2%	69	22.3%	187	28.2%
Passed Four	140	39.4%	68	22.0%	208	31.3%
Total Examinees	355	53.5%	309	46.5%	664	100.0%

Figure 1

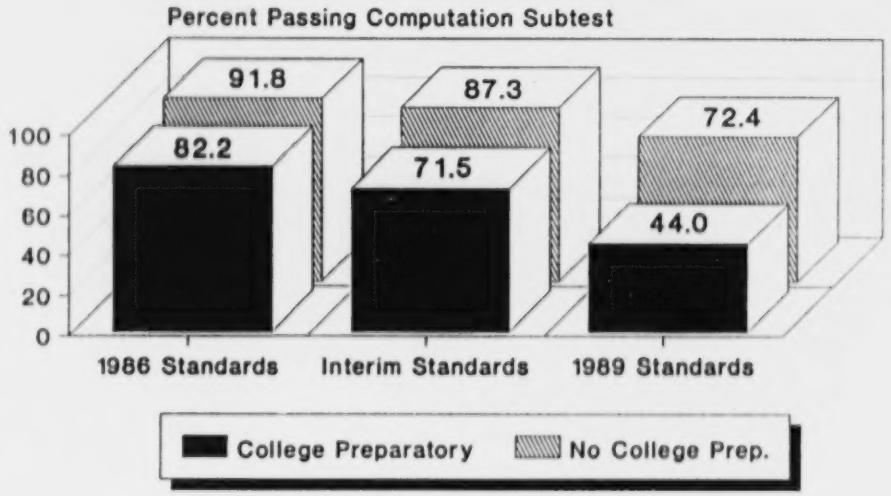
CLAST Results by College Preparatory Experience



Projections based on June 1989 CLAST performance of BCC students

Figure 2

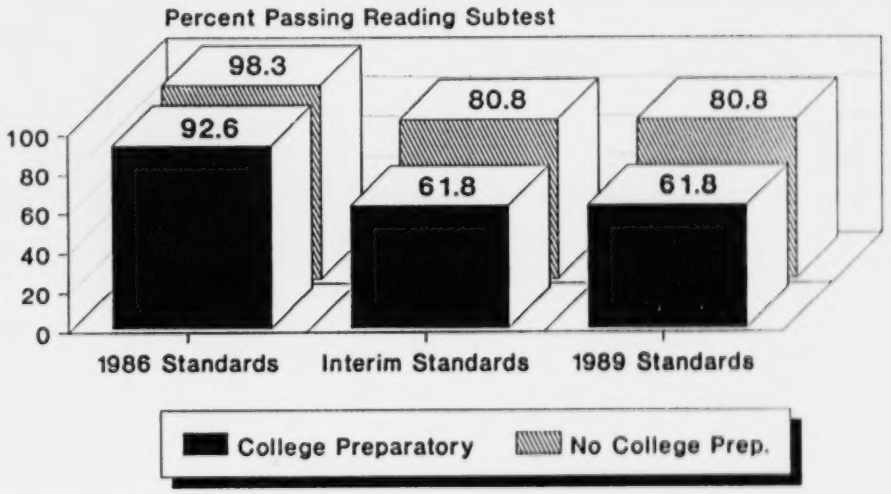
CLAST Computation Results by College Preparatory Experience



Projections based on June 1989 CLAST performance of BCC students

Figure 3

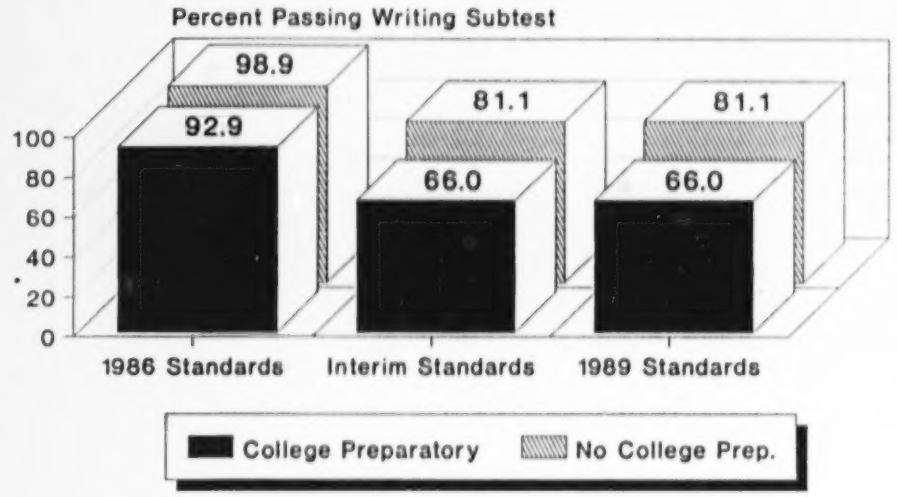
CLAST Reading Results by College Preparatory Experience



Projections based on June 1989 CLAST performance of BCC students

Figure 4

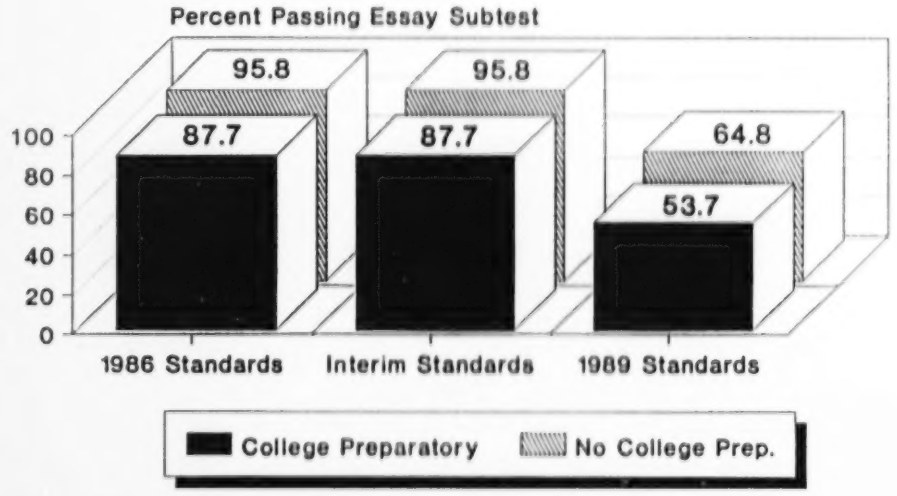
CLAST Writing Results by College Preparatory Experience



Projections based on June 1989 CLAST performance of BCC students

Figure 5

CLAST Essay Results by College Preparatory Experience



Projections based on June 1989 CLAST performance of BCC students

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